

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-6

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Cellmate of Spy for Soviets Is Linked to Prison Escape

NEW YORK - (NYT) A New Jersey man who served time in the same federal prison from which a man convicted of spying for the Soviet Union later escaped, is believed by the federal authorities to have helped the spy flee to South Africa.

In affidavits filed in U.S. District Court in Newark, N.J., Thomas Kupperer, a chief inspector with the Federal Marshal Service, said he also believed that the New Jersey man, Frank Abbott Sweeney, 37 years old, could locate the missing spy, Christopher John Boyce.

Boyce, a code-room clerk for a California military contractor, and a boyhood friend, Andrew Dalton Lee, were accused in early 1977 of selling thousands of CIA documents to the Soviet Union.

Both were convicted a few months later. Boyce was sentenced to 40 years in prison and Dalton, who is still in jail, to a life term. Boyce, now 28 years old, escaped from the maximum security federal prison in Lompoc, Calif., in January 1980, reportedly with the help of other prisoners.

Their lives were the subject of a best-selling book called "The Falcon and the Snowman."

Sweeney was arrested Thursday morning at his home in Closter, N.J., and charged with illegal possession of two pistols. He was held in the custody of federal marshals in Newark overnight, but released Friday on a \$250,000 bond.

From late 1977 to early 1978, Sweeney, imprisoned on a 1976 mail fraud conviction, and Boyce were in the same cellblock at the federal prison on Terminal Island off San Francisco. Sweeney was released in 1979.

After Boyce's escape, the author-

ities began to monitor the movements of Sweeney.

Before Sweeney was arrested, the federal authorities asserted in court papers that he continued "to make active plans involving international travel which, it is believed, will place him in proximity with the fugitive, Christopher Boyce."

The authorities say Sweeney has traveled in South Africa and the former breakaway British colony of Rhodesia - now the black-ruled state of Zimbabwe - on a passport issued in the name of Frances August Shellhammer.

In May 1980, the authorities obtained two letters that Sweeney had written to another inmate who had been in the cellblock with Boyce and had later been living in Hermosa Beach, Calif.

In one of the letters, the authorities said, Sweeney wrote, "Two marshals interviewed me yesterday about our escaped friend. Somehow they have discovered that I helped get him into South Africa. In fact they have managed to pinpoint the exact geographical area. I suspect an informer has been at work. If the Feds contact you, say nothing."

In one of the court documents the marshals said that on Feb. 12, 1980, the State Department gave them a cable from the United States ambassador to South Africa.

The federal authorities said the ambassador had reported that the embassy received an anonymous letter apparently mailed from South Africa that said that "a known mercenary named Shellhammer had assisted the convicted American spy Christopher Boyce in entering South Africa by way of a fake passport and identity for travel through the Orange Free State to Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique."